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throne of the commercial world. There may she long sit,—firm, enlightened, and liberal; not forgetting, in the season of her wealth and power, the arts by which her infancy was nourished. There may she long sit,—the stars of the Union for her coronet, the rock of independence for her footstool!

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#### ART. IX.—*Popular Superstitions.*

*Lectures on Witchcraft, comprising a History of the Delusion in Salem in 1692.* By CHARLES W. UPHAM, *Junior Pastor of the First Church in Salem.* Boston. Carter, Hendee & Babcock. 1831.

*An Essay on Demonology, Ghosts and Apparitions, and Popular Superstitions. Also, an Account of the Witchcraft Delusion at Salem in 1692.* By JAMES THACHER, M. D., A. A. S. Boston. Carter & Hendee. 1831.

It is with much pleasure that we call the attention of our readers to the work of Mr. Upham. It consists of two lectures, which were originally delivered before the Salem Lyceum, and may be regarded as a favorable evidence of the tendency of such institutions to diffuse information, which it is important to the community to acquire, as well as just sentiments upon subjects, that lie within the range of common observation and curiosity. Every one has heard of the witchcraft delusion in Salem; and most of those who are at all familiar with the history of the age in which it appeared, know very well how to estimate the prejudice, which for a long time fastened upon our neighbors of that place a reproach, from which the rest of New England and the world at large were disposed to triumph in being wholly free. It is not the leading object of Mr. Upham to vindicate his place of residence from this reproach, by transferring to others their just portion of responsibility; his historical statement alone would be sufficient for this; but to give a clear and philosophical view of the origin and progress of this strange imposture, and incidentally, of superstitious notions in general. He has performed this task in a manner, which cannot fail to add to the reputation, which he had acquired by his former writings. His style is unaffected and elegant, and his illustrations and reflections appropriate and happy.

The plan of Dr. Thacher is rather more extensive. His design is, to take a general and comprehensive view of superstition in its various forms, and to explain the manner in which it is illustrated by reason and philosophy. In the prosecution of this plan, he is naturally led to examine the same portion of history, to which Mr. Upham had already directed the public attention ; but it is proper to state, that his work was written before that gentleman's appeared. His own intelligent observation and inquiry have furnished him with many interesting facts, particularly in regard to the power of imagination in producing some of those phenomena, which have confounded the ignorant, and perplexed the wise ; and his publication is valuable, as presenting the views of a clear and judicious observer in an important field of speculation, though somewhat too broad to be comprehended within the limits of so short a treatise. In fact, the history of superstition is more than half of the history of man. But if the errors of former times are only partially unveiled, something may be gained towards the correction of those, which continue to exist ; if we do not reach the highest attainable point of elevation, we may yet be placed high enough, to see that portion of the valley below, from which the mist has rolled away.

We are sometimes inclined to believe, that the present generation are raising the shout of victory over superstition, before the enemy has left the field. It would be hazardous to maintain, that the drafts of imposture are no longer honored by credulity, or that all the *idols of the tribe* are deserted by their worshippers. There are yet delusions, and dark ones, too ; we cling with a convulsive grasp to errors, because it seems impossible to us, that any delusion should walk in the noon-day of our intellectual light. We look on those of old with indignation and scorn ; and wonder, perhaps, that our fathers should have been so much inferior in sense and reason to ourselves. Yet many a dark page is yet to be written in the history of our race. There are not a few, who listen to the acclamations of military triumph as they would to the trumpet of jubilee, and crown the conqueror with laurels fit only for an angel's brow, whose hearts burn within them, when they number the victims which witchcraft has hurried to the dungeon and the stake ; while all the blood which superstition ever shed, would be but a rivulet in comparison with that of a single battle-field. This is but one example of the delusions, which

philosophy and reason have never yet been able to destroy ; they have only subdued those errors, which have nothing magnificent about them, to bind them closely to the heart. All will, doubtless, eventually vanish, as spirits are said to disappear with the morning twilight ; but many will outlast the present generation of men ; and while they survive, it is idle to talk of the complete downfall of superstition. In fact, the progress of reason has hardly yet dispelled many of those absurdities, which would seem most likely to fall before it. The mass of mankind are not philosophers, and they regard their own hereditary prejudices as too venerable to be surrendered without an age or two of deliberation, if not of positive and doubtful struggle. They are like those who dwelt near the mountain in Greece, on whose summit the sun shone for hours, before it lighted the valleys. Faith in witchcraft has been banished from the high places of the earth ; it is no more found in the pulpit or the judgment-seat ; but it is still entwined around the hearts of many, and adheres to them as closely, as the consciousness of their existence.

There is no one, whose recollection will not furnish him with abundant evidence of the truth of this remark. It has been our fortune to meet with more than one individual, who did not feel a moment secure from the invasion of evil spirits, unless he carried with him a staff of witch-hazel ; and we remember one in particular, who, having left his talisman behind him, in his hurry to attend an election, was waylaid by them as he returned home at night, and rolled heels over head in the most fearful manner. He often related the circumstance with horror ; and, as if anticipating the most natural solution of the mystery, asseverated, that he had partaken no more liberally of the most formidable spirit of all, than he usually did on similar occasions. We have heard of another, who had unfortunately incurred the displeasure of an old woman in his neighborhood. One evening, as he was passing her door with his wain of hay, his oxen stood perfectly still, and the only parts of their anatomy at all calculated for such an evolution, were lifted straight upwards, by some mysterious impulse ; where they remained, until he was relieved from his dilemma by negotiating a treaty with the author of the mischief. Five years ago, a physician in a neighboring State was indicted for tampering with a pretty material word in a promissory note for nine dollars, so that it was converted into ninety. The only

witness to the forgery was the maker of the note, whose testimony was explicit as to the fact of the alteration. On his cross-examination, he acknowledged, that he had been for a long time, like Andrew Fairservice, 'fley'd wi' a ghaist,' until he was compelled to apply to the physician for relief, who exorcised him in part by throwing in the fire a quart of his blood ; and this was the consideration of the note in question. The witches, he said, commonly assumed the shape of some impertinent old ladies of the neighborhood, who would come to his house in defiance of his express commands to the contrary, and smoke their pipes at discretion, without uttering a word. It is, perhaps, needless to say, that this testimony, which might have been sufficient to hang all the parties concerned two centuries ago, produced in this instance only the acquittal of the physician ; but examples like these, however the wise may scorn them, serve to show that superstition has not yet lost its hold upon the minds of all.

In saying, that reason and philosophy have not yet banished all these errors, we do not forget the good they have already done, or under-value their power to do more ; we simply mean, that much of their appropriate work remains to be performed. Their task will be the more arduous, for the reason, that much of what passes under the name of superstition, when divested of its absurdities, is natural to the mind. So far as it merely implies a belief in the existence of spirits, freed from the incumbrances of a perishable frame, it springs up spontaneously in the breast ; there is no example of an age or nation, scarcely of the most degraded savage tribe, in which it is not found ; and it is confirmed by the voice within us, which proclaims our victory over the grave. Nor is there any thing very absurd in the persuasion, almost as universal as the other, that the spirit, thus separated from the body, may become obvious to human sense. Many have considered it enough to say in refutation of this, that the abstract idea we form of spirit implies its want of every quality, which could enable it to make its presence perceptible ; and if we could form a perfect idea of what spirit is, the answer would be complete. But the deepest researches of philosophy have left us ignorant of its essence ; we know its existence only through certain of its qualities ; so that, however we may doubt, we cannot well deny, that separated spirits may, in some mysterious manner, hold communion with our own. There is at least, probability

enough in favor of this persuasion, to induce the great body of mankind to adopt it as an article of faith. With the general mass of superstitious notions, the case is far otherwise. They have scarcely even the slender basis of imagination to stand upon ; and, in treating of superstition in general, it is no easy matter to separate the absurd from the probable, the extravagant from the partially reasonable, blended as they are like the primary colors in all the hues of nature. Their multiplicity, also, is a serious stumbling-block in the way of the inquirer. A venerable divine, two centuries ago, undertook to write a sermon upon every verse of the epistle to the Colossians. We have no recollection, whether his folio was edifying in proportion to its dimensions ; but we doubt, whether that most ponderous volume would be large enough, to contain the history of superstition. Sir Walter Scott was evidently much embarrassed by this very difficulty ; and one may rise from the perusal of his entertaining work on demonology, with few more precise ideas of any particular branch of the science, than he had when he took it up. We are told by Pliny, of a fish, whose various members were so widely extended in the Mediterranean, that it could not pass the Straits of Gibraltar ; and it is about as difficult to give an accurate view of universal superstition, as it would be to make a scientific description of this monopolist of the sea.

There is one branch of it, however, which is separate and peculiar. It is the subject of witchcraft, which, as we have already said, occupies the whole of one of the works before us, and a portion of the other ; and the modern history of which can be regarded with no other feelings, than those of disgust and horror. The mind may well be humbled by the reflection, that a wild and fatal delusion like this, springing solely from a mis-apprehension of the meaning of certain terms used in the Scriptures, should have been able to subdue all philosophy and common sense, as well as all the impulses of humanity and mercy. No one at this day believes, that the witches of later ages belonged to the same class with those, against whom Moses denounced the punishment of death. The last were justly regarded by the Hebrew lawgiver as a common nuisance, pretending, as they did, to the power of divination and sorcery, and resorting sometimes to the use of poisons, from which their name is derived, to effect their purposes. They seduced the Israelites to the adoration of false

deities ; and this was a crime of peculiar aggravation among a people, who were set apart for the worship of the true God, but were always too ready to return to idolatry. The witchcraft of later times, as Mr. Upham very justly observes, implied a deliberate and formal compact with the Spirit of evil, negotiated with all the precision of a modern indenture ; by which, on the one hand, the witch bound herself to become his subject, and to use all her exertions to promote his interests ; while he invested her, on the other, with a portion of his own attributes, engaging, at the same time, to exercise his own supernatural powers, for her advantage and protection. What the witch of the Hebrews really was, is explained in that remarkable passage of Scripture, which relates the interview of Saul with the witch of En-dor. This personage belonged to a class of impious pretenders, against whom the king, in one of the religious intervals of his wayward career, had undertaken to enforce the penalties provided by the ancient law ; and who were obliged, in consequence, to practise their unholy arts in retirement and obscurity. But when he persisted in violating the commands of the Most High, the hour of their revenge was come. The hosts of his enemies were mustering at his very gates ; the ominous sounds of disaffection and revolt grew louder within his borders ; and misfortune and disaster were gathering around him, like dark clouds around the setting sun. The warning voice of dreams, and Urim, and the prophets was no longer heard in answer to his prayers, and he resorted in terror and despair, to one of these very impostors whom he had persecuted, to open to him the mysterious pages of the book of fate. He sought her dwelling at midnight and in disguise, weighed down by the anguish of a broken spirit, and exhausted by the abstinence, which was then, as it is at this day in the East, required to prepare him for the unusual scene. The woman of En-dor reminded him of the fearful doom which the king had menaced against the exercise of her art ; but with the quick and proud decision of authority, he assures her of his protection. This circumstance alone would have been sufficient to convince her of the rank and dignity of her guest ; but even without this evidence, how could a disguise have concealed from her penetrating eye, the lofty bearing and commanding stature of the goodliest of the sons of Israel ? He commands her to call up the spirit of Samuel ; and affecting to see spirits ascending, she cries out with pretended astonish-

ment and terror, and for the first time appears to recognise her royal visiter. To remove all fear of deception, he commands her to describe the form, which he cannot see ; and when she speaks of an old man enveloped with a mantle, his imagination presents the image of the venerable prophet, and he addresses to him the story of his apprehension and distress. In the heart-broken accents of despair, he complains, that the hosts of his enemies are gathered against him, and that he is forsaken by his God. It was an easy task to predict the fate of a spirit thus crushed and broken. The voice confirms the sentence, which had already been pronounced by his fears ; and he hurries to the field of battle, where, after witnessing the discomfiture of his army, and the death of his sons, he seals the fatal prediction, and falls by his own hand.

Such, at least, appears to us to be the true construction of this mysterious passage ; though we are bound to state, that many distinguished commentators have adopted a different one ; believing, that the venerable prophet did miraculously appear at the call of the sorceress, to announce to Saul his approaching doom. Sir Walter Scott, though with some hesitation, inclines to the same view, which is also taken by Mr. Upham. On either supposition, the case is not wholly free from difficulty ; but neither would give us reason to believe, that the witch of En-dor bore the least resemblance to modern personages of the same name.

During the ascendancy of the Catholic faith, though some enormous instances of cruelty occurred, the clergy in general were not disposed to punish with great severity a crime, which they believed it fully in their power to prevent ; and the mass of the people, being interdicted the use of the Scriptures, could only derive false impressions in regard to them, from the ignorance or fraud of others. With the reformers, the case was far different. They came forth from the lowly walks of life, sharing many of the prejudices of the people, and caring for no philosophy, but the Word of God. They went forth to battle against principalities and powers ; and they knew that it was no light or easy task, nor the struggle of an hour. The whole vast edifice of the gorgeous hierarchy, consecrated by the veneration of countless ages, was to be overthrown, from its topmost battlement to the corner-stone ; and they summoned all their commanding energies to the work. No wonder, that with stern defiance in the

heart, there should have been gloom upon the brow ; no wonder, that their spirits should have been quickened into madness by the contest ; no wonder, when the red light of the fagot and the stake were before them, that they should have felt that the hand of the arch fiend was there. The religious principle with them became a dark and gloomy principle. Firmly persuaded themselves of the existence and active agency of the Spirit of evil, they recognised his power in all the obstacles that beset their progress, and this persuasion was confirmed in their minds by a literal interpretation of the language of Scripture. If reason and philosophy attempted to teach them the impossibility of such a compact, as their own definition of witchcraft implied, they regarded them as little as the painted windows of a Gothic cathedral. There was the divine injunction,—the word itself ; He that hath a familiar spirit, must die.

It was one of the earliest acts of the pilgrims, to prepare an abstract of a criminal and civil code, which was afterwards made the basis of the statute law of Massachusetts. This paper was drawn by one of the most eminent divines of the day ; who, following the same error which had misled so many others, copied that provision of the Levitical law, which made witchcraft punishable with death, and applied it to a wholly different crime ; if indeed such a crime as modern witchcraft can be said to have ever been committed. But if there were ever a people who had an apology for being superstitious, it was that portion of the Puritans who came over to this country. It has often been remarked, that none are more inclined to superstition, than those who dwell in the most grand and solitary scenes ; and, apart from the circumstances of their own situation, there was enough in the wildness and solitude around them, to excite the imagination. Before them was the broad sea, over whose bosom the Providence of God had guided them in the extremity of danger and suffering : and behind them the forests, whose depths were never penetrated by the footsteps of civilized man. It must have seemed like intrusion to enter its mysterious gloom, as if the quick footstep, or the careless voice might break the deep repose of nature, which had been only broken before by the cry of the wild beast, or the dashing of the ocean on its shore. Every thing around them led the mind to high and serious contemplation : every thing was fitted to excite emotions of sublimity and awe. Their reliance upon divine protection was firm and constant ;

its superintending power was visible in all occurrences that threw light at intervals on their melancholy path ; and in every adverse one, they felt the agency of an evil principle, whose strength was exerted for the trial of their virtue, or the punishment of their deviations from duty. Human nature itself was revealed to them in a mode of existence wholly new, but well calculated to cherish and confirm their persuasion of this agency of evil powers. All their vigilance was necessary to guard them from the assaults of savage foes, whose wildness and ferocity, no less than the fearful suddenness of their midnight blow, were such as well became the ministers of darkness, whose path might be traced by the blood of the murdered, or the conflagration of villages. So far from wondering that our fathers shared the superstitious ideas, which prevailed at the period in every other country, it is rather matter of surprise, that the influence of those ideas was so limited here ; for it must be remembered, that they were every where sanctioned by the convictions of the pious, and the apprehensions of the wise ; cherished by the most eminent divines of every persuasion, and promulgated by the most upright judges, whom England ever saw. Their own strong, practical sense, a quality which rarely deserted them, preserved them in a considerable degree from this fatal influence ; and the punishment of witchcraft was rare, until an unusual concurrence of circumstances, acting on the popular conviction, swelled the tide of superstition, and it came heaving in like a resistless flood.

It was in February, 1692, that this fatal delusion arose ; and it was preceded by many of those portents, which even now, are apt to cast a spell over the minds of men, and recall the fierce denunciations of the insane prophet, and the ominous voice which issued from the Holy of Holies, when the last hour of Jerusalem was at hand. Within, the colonists were agitated by ferocious political strife, driven from the ordinary paths of commercial industry by the pirates who infested their shores, and crushed beneath the weight of ponderous debt ; the light of some of the most eminent and virtuous among them had been suddenly withdrawn by death ; and the undefined rumors of mighty vicissitudes abroad, were borne to them upon every breeze from the sea. The French were combined with their savage enemies in unnatural union, and hung like a thunder-cloud upon the edges of the western forest, ready to break upon them in a fiery tempest of desolation and death.

The wild apprehension that the spirits of evil were unchained, and moving with unusual power on the earth, weighed down their hearts, which were commonly sustained by the conscious presence of the Divinity. Every thing seemed preparing for some great and fearful consummation ; all things combined to render them open and sensible to the impressions of some startling event. There was gloom in every heart, and on every brow. When the tidings at length came, of the visitation of those malignant spirits, which they believed Providence had permitted to exist, to accomplish purposes that no human intelligence could see, they fell upon hearts irritated almost to madness ; ready to throw aside all the restraints of their better nature, in the vain persuasion, that they were called to struggle with the powers of darkness.

We shall not attempt to retrace the incidents of that sanguinary drama, of which Salem was the principal seat, though the delusion was fully shared by all the surrounding country. The mind turns shuddering away from the sickening details of its atrocity ; our nature recoils with horror from the history of men converted into demons. We can hardly go back in fancy to that period, when this superstition was living and real to the apprehensions of all ; we can as little realize the power of this conviction now, as in witnessing the representation of Macbeth, we can feel the impression which must once have been created by those mysterious beings, who met the victorious soldier on the midnight heath ; there is nothing to mitigate the feelings of disgust and **aversion**, with which we regard the melancholy exhibition of fanaticism and guilt. Mr. Upham has relieved us of the task ; in pursuing the plan which he proposed to himself, he has given a sufficiently minute and most interesting narrative of all its events, concealing none of its atrocities, and withholding none of its palliations. We regret that we are compelled to differ from him in any particular ; but we cannot admit the correctness of the remark, in the sense in which he would have it understood, that no blame should be attached to judges and jurors, so long as the law of the land required the punishment of witches, for carrying that law into effect ; it assumes the very point which we deny. Doubtless, these officers were bound to execute the law ; but they were equally bound to refrain from conviction and sentence, until the law was shown to be violated ; this, however, was never done ; but a more disgraceful violation of all law, human or divine, to say

nothing of mercy or humanity, than was exhibited throughout the whole of these trials for witchcraft, by those who urged them on, never blackened the history of man. All the safeguards which a wise and just precaution had set for the security of innocence, were unhesitatingly trampled down ; the plainest rules of evidence were thrown aside with contempt ; those leading questions, which the criminal law of the time, not over-merciful, regarded with aversion, were the only sort of examination permitted ; confessions, wrung by the extremity of torture from a broken and exhausted spirit, were not only received, but demanded and prayed for, as the evidence of guilt. The witnesses, who represented themselves, as no one can doubt they were, in another sense than they intended, as under the influence of Satan, were cheered on by the insane applauses of an exasperated mob ; no contradictions, no evasions, not even the plainest perjury, took any thing from the weight of their declarations ; while the denial, the arguments, and characters of the prisoners, were treated with indignity and scorn. Were not such jurors and judges bound to reflect, that the same power, which was falsely said to torture the accusers, might have relieved the wretched in their extremity, by making those who sat in judgment suffer under the same torture ? Were they not bound at least to interpose the same measure of justice which all others might have asked for, in order to examine, if they could not check, so miserable a delusion ? We doubt whether an impartial judgment can clear them of the guilt of blood. It may be said, as it was said by Cotton Mather, that the confessions were of themselves sufficient for conviction ; but a very limited knowledge of human nature might have taught them, that there is no duress like that of fear and horror, and the hope of life ; while the agony of such an accusation, with the aversion and dread reflected from the faces of all around, might even have induced, in minds thus overwhelmed, a persuasion that they were really subject to some supernatural influence. At all events, the lesson is one whose instruction ought not to be lost. We can, however, hardly conceive of the depravity, which hurried the youthful accusers on to such a work of death. At first, it was probably no more than the childish propensity for mischief, which loves to sport with the follies of the old ; but when the alarm had spread, the dread of detection was added to the passion for notoriety, until their united influence overwhelmed

every other feeling ; and there was no counteracting influence to weaken their effect. It is a pity, that the experiment resorted to by Boerhaave in the alms-house at Haerlem, had not been tried upon them. Its youthful inmates were seized, one after another, with the most violent convulsions ; the experienced physician directed furnaces to be erected, in which the arm of the first new patient was to be burned to the bone ; and the remedy was so efficacious, that the afflicted were all healed with miraculous despatch.

There is another species of superstition, of a less fatal character. We allude to apparitions of various kinds, which every one is ready to explain in the most satisfactory manner, while almost every one can detect in himself an inclination to believe in their reality ; as the physician, who was attempting to demonstrate to a patient the absurdity of believing that he was haunted by a skeleton, was somewhat startled by his patient's assurance, that the skull was at that moment visible over his shoulder. Sir Walter Scott believes, that the influence of certain states of mind upon the fancy, or of ill-health, is the cause of most of these spectral visitations ; but he adds a pretty broad qualification of the doctrine, by way of proviso, before he leaves the subject. Dr. Thacher's scepticism is rather more confirmed ; he appears to think, that all the instances on record will admit of a rational explanation, without resort to supernatural agency. We are inclined to believe, that the full power of the imagination is hardly yet realized ; it is curious to observe, how often and how readily it gets the better of the judgment. The case of animal magnetism is sufficient to show, that it can sometimes heal diseases ; and a story related by Dr. Thacher proves, that it may have equal efficacy in producing them. He tells us of a farmer in Pennsylvania, who vanquished a rattlesnake, after a fatiguing contest, and on returning home to announce his victory, seized by mistake his son's waistcoat, instead of his own more ample one ; but finding all efforts to adapt it to his person entirely vain, he at once perceived, that he must have been bitten by his foe, and that he had become distended by the virulence of the poison in the most alarming manner ; three physicians were summoned, but the presence of the whole faculty would have availed nothing, until the son made his appearance, with the garment of the patient hanging in graceful folds about him. Physicians are even at this day somewhat reluctant to appeal to the imagination for the cure of maladies,

lest they should seem to aspire to the reputation and honors of a quack ; but there is no reason to doubt its power ; nor is there any, why the most active principle of our nature should not be fully investigated and understood. President Smith of New Jersey has given us an explanation of apparitions, of a more precise and scientific character. He believes, that the motions or vibrations of the nervous system of a man in full health are undisturbed and regular, and present only just images to the mind ; but that, by disease or infirmity, they may be affected either wholly or in part, and made to present only false and fantastic ones. Perhaps this is no more than an attempt to explain the mechanical operation of the causes previously suggested. Dr. Rush resolves illusions into a disease, in which false perceptions take place in some of the senses, depending on the excitement of motion in a particular organ, which does not vibrate with the impression made upon it, but communicates it to another part on which a similar impression was formerly made. We do not pretend to be able to determine the accuracy of these solutions ; and it is quite as satisfactory to the general reader to know, that such illusions are commonly attributed to excited feeling, arising from a variety of causes, among which anxiety, over-exertion, and disease, are the most prominent ones ; though they may sometimes occur without the apparent intervention of any of these causes. These explanations have at least this advantage, whether they be satisfactory or not, that if they cannot be established by demonstration, it is just as difficult to prove them to be false ; and nothing is more annoying to the pride of philosophy, than to be unable to assign a cause for any of this world's phenomena. The case of Lord Lyttelton is one of the most striking on record. This noble profligate, as is well known, declared, that he had been warned by the apparition of his mother, that he should die within three days ; and his death took place at the expiration of the time appointed. All these various modes of solution have been repeatedly applied, with various degrees of probability, to this case ; but the more modern explanation is, that he put an end to his own life by poison ; and there was nothing in his character to induce us to believe, that he would hesitate at such an unseasonable jest ; though it is by no means impossible, that the disordered action of his nervous system, exhausted as he was by unlimited excess, might have conjured up precisely such a vision. The spectres which beset Nicolai of

Berlin, more numerous than those that assailed the much-enduring St. Anthony, are universally ascribed to disease, the same cause to which he himself attributed them ; as, when he went back to the practice of blood-letting, which he had discontinued for a time, the whole train disappeared together. We find some interesting statements in the work of Dr. Thacher, of cases not very dissimilar ; among others, of a worthy divine in Virginia, who was compelled by sickness to relinquish his pastoral duties, and was distressed by the consciousness, when his health was partially restored, that he had not properly availed himself of his ability to resume them. While in this state, he was warned by the apparition of an old man of imposing air and stature, to return to his labors, and to undertake the additional task of restoring the church to the model of the primitive ages. The good man would willingly have declined this apostolical mission, as somewhat beyond his abilities ; but so fully convinced was he of the supernatural character of his visiter, that he did not dare to disobey his injunctions ; and he applied to Dr. Thacher for advice, who, finding it impossible to convince him of his delusion, very judiciously advised him to begin his reform by preaching up those points of doctrine in regard to which there was no controversy, and to wait the further orders of the spectre ; but the plan, upon which he had actually entered, was broken off by his death. One of the most singular cases of the kind, of which we have any knowledge, is taken by Dr. Thacher from the Edinburgh Journal of Science, and was communicated to Dr. Brewster by the husband of the lady, who was the subject of the illusion. Her health was considerably impaired at the time when the circumstances related by her husband took place. He says, that

‘ On the 30th of the same month, (December, 1829,) at about four o’clock, Mrs. B. came down stairs into the drawing-room, which she had quitted a few moments before, and on entering the room, saw me, as she supposed, standing with my back to the fire. She addressed me, asking how it was I had returned so soon (I had left the house for a walk half an hour before.) She said I looked fixedly at her with a serious and thoughtful expression of countenance, but did not speak. She supposed I was busied in thought, and sat down in an arm-chair near the fire, and within a couple of feet at most of the figure she still saw standing before her. As, however, the eyes still continued to be fixed upon her,

after a few moments, she said, "Why don't you speak?" The figure, upon this, moved off toward the window, at the farther end of the room, the eyes still gazing on her, and passed so very close to her in doing so, that she was struck by the circumstance of hearing no step nor sound, nor feeling her clothes brushed against, nor even any agitation of the air. The idea then arose for the first time in her mind, that it was no reality, but a spectral illusion.'

It was unfortunate, that the lady, in the consternation of the moment, forgot to resort to an *experimentum crucis*, which had been previously recommended by Dr. Brewster, and may be found extremely convenient to all who have occasion to inquire into the character of such unexpected guests; namely, pressing the eye, in order to produce the effect of seeing double; in which case the optical illusion, if it be such, will remain single, while duplicates will be presented of every other object. On the whole, there is no doubt, that most of these apparitions, perhaps all of which we have any account, are the mere offspring of disordered health or fancy; though it would have been hard to induce the clergyman, who was called to sound the trumpet of reform, to believe this, in opposition to the evidence of two of his most confidential senses. We are almost tempted to agree on this subject with the chaplain in Old Mortality, when he undertook to explain to Lord Evandale the apparition of Henry Morton; it was his deliberate opinion, that either the said Morton himself, or his ghost, had really appeared, or that the whole was a *deception visus*; which of the three hypotheses was the true one, it was impossible to pronounce with certainty; but he was ready to die in the belief, that one of the three was the cause of the disturbance.

We are not to confound the persuasion entertained by many, of the possibility of some mysterious communication of the death of others, with the fanciful superstitions of earlier times; with that of the Bansbie, for example, so beautifully used by Moore in the melody, where he alludes to the loss of him 'of the hundred fights,' or that of the Brownie of the Highlands, and the other spectres which presaged approaching death. This persuasion is more common than men are willing to confess; and many of the cases, by which it is supported, are familiar to the recollections of all. In connexion with this subject, the mind involuntarily turns to the instance, in which the early death of one of the brightest of the sons of genius in this city,

was revealed at the moment of its occurrence, to his venerable father, himself just sinking beneath the pressure of infirmity, at a distance from his home. We have also heard, on authority which we cannot question, another instance, in which a lady of no vulgar mind communicated to her friends her impression of the loss of a favorite daughter, from whom she had long been separated, and where the impression was justified by the event. A curious example of a similar kind, is related by Isaac Walton in his *Life of Dr. Donne*; and we are almost tempted to embrace the beautiful theory of the worthy old biographer, who accounts for it by supposing the existence of a sympathy of soul; as when the string of one of two lutes in the same apartment has been touched, a soft responsive note will be echoed from the other. Of all the kinds of superstition, this, if this indeed be one, is the kind which we are most reluctant to cast away,—the idea, that there may be some communion, of which we cannot comprehend the nature, between the spirits of the dead and ours; though it may be, that there is deception in the evidence on which these examples rest; it may be, that in this case, as in others, our fancies assume the aspect of bright and living realities.

It would be unpardonable not to notice the ancient and universal art of divination, considering the earnestness with which men have labored to display their superstition, in attempting to penetrate the mysterious veil of the future. Their efforts have been zealous, in proportion to the difficulty of the task; if half the perseverance which they have exhibited in this pursuit had been systematically applied to any hopeful one, there is no estimating the results to which it might have led. Even here, they seem in general to have been tolerably contented with their success; having regularly made a point of forgetting all the false responses of the oracle, and of proclaiming with unspeakable triumph, any solitary instance of a prophecy fulfilled. The art is certainly not without pretensions on the score of antiquity; the witch of En-dor was a fortune-teller, though her mystery was in less vogue than it afterwards became. In Rome, it was converted into the religion of the State; it would be ludicrous, if any thing relating to the Romans can excite that feeling, to examine the machinery by which they labored to draw future events from darkness into light; and we are inclined to apprehend, that Cato was not the only one who ridiculed it, even in that day, when heresy was as little tolerated

as it has been since. On the eve of an election, tents were pitched without the city, at which he who presided sat gravely with the augur, to observe the omens; there they watched carefully the appearance of the heavens, and the singing and flight of birds, and if the magistrate happened to hear thunder, or observe any unpropitious omen, as he well might do when his own party were not on the ground in sufficient force, the auspices were unfavorable, and the election was forthwith adjourned to another day. Even if it appeared, six months afterwards, that there was some mistake about the omens, the election was set aside. We have sometimes wished, that this practice had never been exploded. So when a ship was crowned with garlands, and the trumpet had sounded for its departure, the alighting of a swallow on the rigging, or an unhappy sneeze upon the left, outweighed all the favorable indications of the wind and tide. Drawing of lots was an authentic mode of ascertaining one's destiny. The Eternal City was overspread with gloom, when the appetite of the sacred chickens appeared less vigorous than usual; and, on the contrary, nothing could exceed the public satisfaction, when they ate as if consuming a corporation dinner. There is no end to the devices, by which the Romans endeavored to read the book of fate; most of them were abandoned as the world grew older; but there was one which descended to them from the earliest antiquity, and was preserved until a comparatively recent time. This was astrology, founded on the notion, that the star which was rising at the hour of one's birth, ever afterwards influenced, or at least foreboded his destiny; a persuasion, supposed to be derived from those who watched the stars from the plains of Chaldea. It is worthy of remark, that in Rome, as in modern Europe, the great could not condescend to travel the same path to futurity with the vulgar; the rich applied to the astrologers, who carried a mysterious ephemeris, the prototype of our modern almanac, in which the rising and setting, the conjunction, and other appearances of the stars, were set down; while the poor were fain to have recourse to the threadbare fortune-teller, of what Horace calls the deceitful *Circus Maximus*, who gave them a destiny brilliant in proportion to their ability to pay. In the sixteenth century and later, the heavenly bodies, in the same manner, were supposed to indicate the fortunes of the great, as well as the vicissitudes of nations; while the inspection of the face or

hand was sufficient to prognosticate the destiny of the poor. This most singular of fancies, that the movement of worlds was regulated with a view to the destiny of an inhabitant of one of the smallest of the whole, pervaded the loftiest intellects of the time ; even the miraculous discernment of Bacon was not insensible to its influence ; and Scott has given some striking illustrations in *Kenilworth* and *Quentin Durward*, of its power over nobles and kings. Every one remembers the story of Napoleon pointing to the sun of Austerlitz, and watching, from the forsaken halls of the Kremlin, his waning star, which soon went down in blood. The astrologer was once invested with every honor, which gratified pride and ostentation could bestow ; his predictions were generally as mysterious, as the response of the Delphic oracle to Pyrrhus ; but woe to the prophet, when the horoscope proved false. Mr. Partridge is the last of these worthies on record ; he fell on evil days, when the artillery of the Royal Society had battered down all the high pretensions of his art ; and his most unlucky star was in the ascendant, when he encountered the fatal ridicule of Swift. The vulgar mystery of fortune-telling has escaped the same fate with astrology, because it wisely avoided the attempt to soar so high ; it has been kept in tolerable preservation by the gypsies ; and there is scarcely a village so poor, as to be without its wise woman, who reads one's fortune in the lines of his hand, or the grounds of an exhausted tea-cup. Mr. Upham gives us an interesting account of a venerable lady by the name of Pitcher, who enjoyed an enviable reputation in this neighborhood, some twenty years ago. Her power, it seems, was inherited ; and her dwelling, situated in a wild and romantic spot in Lynn, near the borders of the sea, was resorted to by many a curious pilgrim. Her skill was most signal, in ascertaining the deposit of stolen goods ; a branch of the arts, which is somewhat liable to mis-interpretation ; but a story is related of her by Mr. Whitman, in his Lecture on Popular Superstition, which indicates that her power in discovering lost persons was rather more questionable. He assures us, that application was made to this lady, respecting a person who had suddenly disappeared ; she without hesitation pronounced him murdered, and charged an unlucky family of negroes with the crime, who were immediately arrested and imprisoned ; but were at length discharged by the unimpeachable testimony afforded by the re-appearance of the lost personage himself.

There are various other branches of the subject, to which we would willingly turn our attention ; particularly, the thousand omens which have descended from early times to ours, and the beautiful vision of the fairies, which perished some centuries ago. But we must hasten to a close.

It has already been observed, that much of the superstition in the world springs from that conviction of the immortal nature of the spirit within us, which is found among the rudest tribes, as well as the most refined communities. The strength of this conviction certainly varies in proportion to the degree of refinement ; as there are instances, in which humanity is degraded to the level of irrational existence, and no one requires to be shown the effect of advancement in knowledge, in dispelling the phantoms of ignorance, or presenting them in their real form and proportions ; but it is the cause, to which we owe the boasted dignity of our nature. It is striking to witness the efforts of the mind, even when sunk in debasement, or crushed beneath the accumulated weight of error, to escape from its darkness and cast away its chains, speculating where it cannot reason, and pressing onward, in obedience to the intimations of the active principle within, even when it wanders in an obscure and doubtful way. If it dimly suggest the possibility of another state of being to the least enlightened of our race, how does the soul burn to penetrate the shadows, which hide it from the view ! If it speak of superior intelligences, exempted from the stern law of decay and dissolution, how do we labor to invest them with reality ! Thus the wildest notions eventually spring from a high and honorable principle, which only requires a guide to conduct it in the proper paths. Its activity is beyond its strength, until wisdom and knowledge have enlightened and confirmed it ; it loses its way, because it has too much confidence in itself ; it relies on its own power to discover hidden things, as well as to explain those which are seen ; believing, that the faculty which can catch a faint glimpse of distant objects, can bring them fully to the view. All this is well, so long as the right end is pursued by the right means ; but the difficulty is, that the intellect is apt to bewilder itself with speculation, and to become filled with wild and unreasonable fancies ; as shadows float before the eye, which is wearied by being long fixed on some object too remote. Such was the radical error of ancient philosophy, if a vast edifice of theory erected on a slender basis of fact, be fairly entitled to

the name ; a breath was sufficient to overturn the whole ; it formed hypotheses, instead of ascertaining facts ; it undertook to explain phenomena, rather than to observe them ; and in this way, instead of leading men to the knowledge of the real nature of things, it led them in the very opposite direction. Nor was it wonderful, when philosophy itself became the fertile source of error, that the minds of those, who were not philosophers, should have been misled by the example. It was reserved for the most commanding intellect of modern times, who has won the highest honors that can crown an earthly name, to reveal the true divining rod, the unfailing oracle, comprehended in the simple terms, experiment and observation ; to teach the only just reply to the hitherto unanswered question, What is truth ?

This error of the ancient world was not, however, an unnatural one ; it was merely the result of the principle to which we have alluded, misled by the eagerness of its just and laudable efforts ; and there are instances enough, of the operation of the same causes in later times. Whenever any event is presented to the mind, its first step is to inquire the cause, and this is generally found in some other event immediately preceding in the order of time. A curious instance of this occurred no longer ago than the last century. The fish, on which many of the inhabitants of Norway depended for subsistence, suddenly vanished from their coasts ; the practice of inoculation for the small-pox had just then been introduced, and was instantly fixed upon as the cause of the calamity ; and, as the people considered the risk of that disorder a trifle in comparison with starvation, nothing could exceed their righteous indignation against all who undertook to cure them. Sometimes, where no event of sufficient importance has occurred in connexion with one which excites deep interest, the imagination lends its aid in furnishing a cause ; witness the plague of Athens, which was attributed to the poisoning of the fountains, a delusion precisely similar to that prevailing at this day in Hungary in regard to the disease, which is traversing the whole breadth of the Eastern hemisphere, like a destroying angel. Most commonly, however, the popular fancy inclines to neither of these modes of explanation, but resorts to that favorite acknowledgement of ignorance, a supernatural cause ; thus, prayers and processions, two centuries ago, were considered the sovereign specific for the plague. The voice of some

malignant demon is uttered in the thunder, and the fierce conflicts of contending spirits are visible in the northern light ; while the aspect of some benignant deity is revealed in the tranquil beauty of ocean, earth and sky. The world becomes a divided empire ;—a battle-field for two great principles, of equal, but opposing power. A fearful barrier, indeed, it is, which these fears and speculations, ripened into prejudices, oppose to the progress of intellectual light. From their very nature, they become incorporated with religion, and debase it ; even Christianity, pure, elevated, and powerful as it is, either bows before them, or is darkened by their influence. In Athens, they who undertake to explain the causes of lightning and thunder, become the enemies of the gods ; Galileo is condemned in Rome, to one hundred and fifty repetitions of the seven penitential psalms. These prejudices, thus confirmed, pervert the natural tendencies of the mind, and convert ignorance into delusion ; at first they are the offspring of error, then they become its cause, by the penalties which they denounce against all who deny them. Zoroaster was converted by them into a magician, Roger Bacon into an enemy of religion, and De Villa Nova was hurried to the stake. Is it wonderful, that the fetters of error should be so slow to fall, when such a price is to be paid for truth ? Such are some of the causes of superstition ; but there is another to which we have not yet adverted. It is the abuse of superior knowledge for the purposes of imposition. We cannot better explain this, than by using the illustration which Mr. Upham has afforded us.

‘ Let us suppose, for instance, that some person belonging to an ignorant and superstitious tribe, had received information through the channel of secret tradition, or had ascertained by a lucky conjecture, or by profound reflection and calculation, the very minute, or hour, or day, within which a solar eclipse would take place. How easy would it be for that person to induce the whole community to believe him to be in secret connexion with the higher powers, and to enjoy the confidential intercourse of the deities who rule the world ! Let us suppose, that he gives out word in an oracular and mysterious manner, that in consequence of the unwillingness of the people to receive law from him as from their rightful sovereign, or their true prophet and priest, his friends and protectors, the higher powers, would, at a specified time, withdraw the light of the sun and leave them to dwell in a world of eternal night, or dissolve the system of the uni-

verse. His threat might not at first be regarded; perhaps it would be laughed to scorn. Many, however, would be in suspense, and wait in anxious doubt the approach of the day that was to determine its truth. On that day the sun would rise as bright, perhaps brighter than usual, it would mount through a clear sky with an undiminished and glowing radiance up toward the highest heaven. The whole people would watch its course with solicitous attention, and as it moved on steadily and triumphantly in its accustomed path, the belief that the prediction was about to prove false would gain strength in their minds. The pretended prophet would pass round them with a calm complacency of demeanor that indicated entire confidence, and a feeling of satisfaction in the doom that was about to fall on those who had denied his authority, derided his pretensions, and scorned his power.

‘ Soon, however, a change would begin to be discerned in the atmosphere, the gazers would exclaim, that the sun was dissolving, that its disk was breaking, and its whole face disappearing from the heavens. The terror and awe of the people would spread and deepen in every direction. The sun’s rays would fall feeble and dim upon the earth; a tint of mingled blue and yellow would be spread over the fading, sickening, dying world; the darkness of a night, even more awful than that which closed the primal day of the first parents of the human family, would gradually settle upon the earth, and the stars would begin to beam in the sunless sky! ’

‘ The whole population, confounded, terrified, and driven to distraction, would rush in penitence and despair to the presence of their prophet; they would supplicate his forgiveness for their rebellious disregard of his authority and warnings, and would promise to honor, serve, revere, and obey him forever, if he would use his influence with the higher powers to procure their pardon, and to stay the progress of the dissolution and ruin that were coming upon the world. The dignified and apparently displeased impostor, after much affected reluctance, listens to the request, mutters forth some unintelligible sounds, goes through a solemn ceremony, looks up on high, waves his hand, and promises, upon the condition that they will acknowledge the divinity of his mission and yield entire obedience to him, that the sun shall be restored in the heavens. The grateful multitude await the fulfilment of the promise; and soon their eyes behold the glorious luminary re-appearing, the light of day is again diffused abroad, and the world goes on in its usual course. In this manner, was the confidence of the people secured and abused.’

Whenever we enumerate the causes of superstition, we suggest the remedy. It is almost superfluous to remark, that

it lies in the progress of reason and knowledge. The advancement of physical science destroys the thousand errors and delusions, which spring from ignorance of physical causes ; since the days of Franklin, the veriest simplicity is in no danger of mistaking lightning for the exhibition of a malignant demon's influence ; and a child may laugh at the grave pretensions of astrology. In the same proportion as this knowledge is diffused, is intellectual and moral science aided in its progress ; each in its measure, promotes and cherishes the other ; each and all carry on the great work of improvement, urging us onward to the attainment of the end of all true science, the elevation, if we may not say the perfection, of our nature. We conclude, with borrowing on this point the intelligent remarks of Dr. Thacher.

‘ The present is an era, pre-eminently distinguished for improvement in physical and moral philosophy ; and forgetting the things that are behind, we are pressing forward in the race with rapid strides to the melioration of the condition of the physical and moral world. Had the stupendous works performed, and those contemplated at the present day, been predicted to our fathers in the seventeenth century, they would have trembled with alarm, lest their posterity were destined to form a league with the infernal powers. The paralyzing idea, that the present state of knowledge is as perfect as our nature will admit, should be utterly reprobated ; for knowledge is eternally progressive ; and we can have no claim to be estimated as the benefactors of posterity, unless by our own efforts and toils we add to the achievements of our ancestors.’

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#### ART. X.—*Effects of Machinery.*

*The Working Man’s Companion, No. 1. The Results of Machinery, being an Address to the Working Men of the United Kingdom.* pp. 216. American Edition. Philadelphia. 1831.

This little book was published under the superintendence of the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge. Its object is to convince the working men of the United Kingdom, of the folly and wickedness of attempting to arrest the progress of improvement, by the destruction of machinery. It is written in a plain, unadorned style, but it is replete with valuable facts,